



Rotator Cuff Surgery FAQ

Q. Why should I come to HSS for my surgery?

A. HSS is the top orthopedic hospital according to *U.S. News & World Report* (2011). Our nursing staff has also been recognized with the prestigious Magnet Award for Nursing Excellence.

At HSS, you will find the best surgeons, the best hospital, and the best nurses – a winning combination for successful outcomes.

Q. How long will I be in the hospital?

A. Typically arthroscopic rotator cuff repair is an ambulatory surgery - you go home the same day of the surgery.

Q. What type of anesthetic will I need?

A. Typically arthroscopic rotator cuff repair is performed with a regional block at Hospital for Special Surgery. You will be sedated and can sleep through the operation. General anesthesia is usually not necessary.

Q. How long will I be in a sling?

A. The rotator cuff repair has to be protected for 4-6 weeks after surgery. As such, you will be in a sling for this time period. Passive motion with a therapist is often started within 1-2 weeks after the operation. However, you will have to wait 4-6 weeks after the surgery to perform active shoulder motion so that the repair has time to heal.

Q. When can I shower?

A. I do not like your stitches to get wet. Therefore, you may shower when you get home, but the incision will need to be covered. I recommend using saran wrap around the area to prevent it from getting wet. The stitches will be removed at the first follow up appointment 7-14 days after the surgery; thereafter, it is safe to get the incision wet.

Q. How long should I use the pain medication?



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A. This is different for each patient; some are able to use Tylenol or Advil after you leave the hospital, and others require pain medication as needed for 2-3 weeks. A general rule is that you should try to decrease your use of these medications as time passes.

Q. When can I drive?

A. You should not drive as long as you are taking narcotic pain medication. You should also not drive while you are in a sling; as such, I typically recommend that you do not drive for 6 weeks after the surgery.

Q. When can I return to work?

A. It depends on your occupation. It is never a mistake to take more time off in the beginning of your recovery, as it will give you time to focus on your surgery. Typically, I recommend taking at least 1 week off of work for arthroscopic rotator cuff repair if you are able to work with a sling. If you cannot work with a sling on, your return to work is dependent on the size of the tear and the type of work that you do.

Q. I feel "clicking" inside the shoulder, is this normal?

A. The clicking is a result of the soft tissue moving across the joint. This sensation usually diminishes as your muscles get stronger.

Q. I am experiencing a lot of swelling and bruising, is this normal?

A. Fluid can accumulate in the arm due to the effect of gravity. Patients often notice swelling and bruising that goes down to the fingers. The swelling and bruising diminishes over time.

Q. When can I go to the dentist?

A. Please wait until 6 weeks after surgery, as the joint is still healing and there is increased blood flow to this area.

Q. Can I travel?

A. In general, I like to see you before you fly. If you are traveling by car, you should be sure to take frequent breaks so that you don't feel too stiff when getting up. On an airplane, I like you to take a couple of walks during the flight. Having an aisle and bulkhead seat will help you get more space.



Q. Is there a better time of year to have the surgery?

A. This is a personal decision; some patients like to have the surgery in good weather so that they may walk outdoors as part of their recovery; others prefer to do the surgery in the winter so that they may recover in time to participate in springtime activities.